
Seminar to be presented at
The ONE BBSCON Electronic Bulletin Board Conference
(Colorado Springs, August 1993)

Powers of the Xanadu* Publishing Method for Network Publishing with Royalty

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The Problem.

Everyone wants to know: how do we handle copyright and the sale of documents on computer networks? Emotions run high on this issue.

Some say that electronic documents create a new grey area to which traditional publishing law does not apply. Some say all information should be free. Some seem to think *no* information should be free.

The money angle is conspicuous, but there are other issues. The first, obvious issue is this: Who is responsible for the contents? The second, lurking issue is this: How can people make reasonable use of materials in new ways and new contexts?

The Xanadu approach: First let's pretend to be traditional...

Let's begin by acknowledging that we live and must operate in a world of existing laws and traditions, and see how we may adapt and extend them to get the right kind of overall system.

We believe we can get much more for everyone through the extension of traditional publishing methods-- much more, both in general benefit to all, and in potential profits to participants. In the

Xanadu method, we take traditional publishing and fly it to the moon.

Laws and traditions of publishing

There is a body of law on the subject of publishing. In traditional law, the process of publishing is *making something public*, usually a paper document. The **publisher** is someone who claims to hold the rights in the object, is held accountable for its contents, and reaps the profits from its sale. **Printers and distributors** are those support businesses which aid in the publishing process; they are normally not responsible for the contents of the document.

Xanadu 1. Recognition of traditional publishing roles.

Xanadu publishing begins with a *publisher*, someone who claims to own the rights to a document or object, and wants to make it available to the public. The publisher may of course be the *author*, in the great tradition of self-publishing. (However, in order to run a straightforward network we just want one signature on the contract for a document. That person is called the *publisher*, and any deals with authors are the publisher's responsibility.)

The publisher decides the *royalty*, which is the fee per byte that the publisher will charge for the digital object. This is the amount the publisher will get whenever the material is sold, for each byte sold. (Usually "royalty" refers to what the publisher gives the *author*, but it's the handiest word for this concept.)

(Different parts of the document may cost different amounts. But the rates had better be very small or nobody will buy; or perhaps worse, high royalties will motivate early purchasers to give the material away to everyone else.)

The publisher makes a deal with the *Xanadu service provider*, a firm or individual operating with the Xanadu publishing methods. The service provider takes material from the publisher and actually gets it to users. Thus the Xanadu service provider is like the printer and distributor of the paper world.

Typically the publisher will pay the service provider in advance to store the material, but publisher and service provider are free to make a variety of arrangements between themselves.

Xanadu 2. Formal act of publication.

The publisher places the document with the service provider and signs a paper to solemnize publicly the event of publication and publicly assume responsibility for the contents. (The binding equivalent of a paper signature will of course be acceptable.)

Xanadu 3. Delivery of any portions, with royalty on every byte.

The service provider, through the software, then supplies any requested portion to any customer requesting it. Transmission is by any convenient means (local phone, Internet, etc.). Money is collected by any convenient means. The service provider may charge any amount for the delivery, provided that the stated royalty is returned to the publisher each time a byte is sent to any customer. This too is handled in the software package.

Xanadu 4. QUOTATION BY POINTER (transpublication).

Any publisher may freely, without communication or prearrangement, quote from anything else which has already been published by this method. The quoted material is virtually and logically included in the new document or object, and automatically delivered as part of the new object. *In the detailed transactions of this delivery, however, the quoted material is bought by the user from the original publisher at the instant of delivery.*

The quotation is handled in the software, by means of a special pointer to the original. The quoted material is not copied into the new document or referred to in textual form; it remains in the space of the original publisher. (This may be a local cache permanently associated with the quoting document.) This means that the quoted material is *always* bought from the original publisher at the time of request.

We call this *transpublication*, the virtual republication of something owned by another publisher. (Virtual inclusion across a document boundary, with or without publication, we call *transclusion*.)

Xanadu 5, The Beauty Part:

OPEN METAMEDIA PUBLISHING, A NEW WORLD

This means that in the Xanadu world anybody can quote anything, without permission, using text, graphics, sound, music, video and animation as transcluded boilerplate. Besides transcluded quotation, people may create links of any kind, commenting on, pointing to, and arguing with materials in other documents.

This will be a completely new interconnected information environment. It will be *Metamedia*, new constructs from old materials. It will allow us all-- you, me, the postman, the kids-- to create a great web of interconnected hypertext and hypermedia. This will not be "pure information," for there is no such thing. The links will be created by individuals, not by the system, and every link and transclusion will be part of somebody's document or information object. And so like a library, the metamedia docuverse will support a grand pluralism of ideas and viewpoints.

Xanadu 6. Technical and contractual support.

The roles and relationships embodied here are both embodied in the software and acknowledged in the contracts.

Xanadu 7. Freedom to read in private (with no record kept).

Freedom of the press means that anyone can publish and anyone may read, in private. We support that privacy and keep no records of who reads what, or else *reading would become a political act*.

Where it stands

The Xanadu publishing method was proposed decades ago. Though it is simple to state, the technical implications are profound, and implementation has been difficult. We intend to begin service shortly.